

2021 vacation scheme – an entire commercial law firm right here in my living room!

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Like most law students, trainees and new starters, it was all virtual for us on the 2021 Browne Jacobson vacation scheme. 2020's scheme had been cancelled so we were the first virtual cohort, mostly attending from our homes. BJ had provided us all with laptops and we were talked through logon during the first morning. After a welcome session and IT training, we got to know each other as players in a business game 'how law firms make money'.

On day 2, I connected with my Health Advisory and Litigation team, based across the offices. As a career changer with NHS experience, I am hoping to specialise in this area. BJ's health team is highly reputed in the industry so I was pleased to be placed here. I was given the opportunity to attend client meetings during the first week, and draft attendance notes which assist in reporting back to healthcare clients. An immediate benefit of remote working was that I was able to attend an Inquest in

Nottingham. I gained fantastic insight and exposure into the work of the department, experienced a Coroner giving summary and conclusions, and improved my understanding of the remit, purpose and procedure.

I was able to have input on several different cases including one which resulted in an urgent court hearing. As well as seeing cases unfold incorporating many areas of law, I improved my knowledge and awareness of the obligations of healthcare clients and the role of law firms representing them.

I had been quite worried about missing out on being able to make a good impression in person; and not getting the chance to interact socially with BJ colleagues, trainees, and other participants on the scheme. I needn't have been. We were teamed up with a trainee buddy and allocated a supervisor; mine checked in regularly to see how I was getting on. Although virtual, BJ arranged lots of opportunities to meet other teams, trainees and planned socials for us. A team building 'rogue agent' online spy game, solving clues to capture an escaped agent was probably the most I have laughed in months!

I did actually manage to get a foot in the door of the Manchester offices in Spinningfields during week 2, and it's fair to say I would be pretty happy working there. The offices are well equipped with seated and standing desks; comfortable working, breakout, meeting and relaxations areas; and natural landscape wall backdrops.

We were set a group presentation project during the fortnight with a digital tech theme. I'm pretty sure this was to test our skills at working virtually as a team, something crucially important in a post-pandemic world to connect and collaborate with colleagues and clients. We managed this well, using planning meetings at the end of the day to catch up about our days as well as progress our project. We all found that we learnt more about digital and legal tech through the project and even picked up new skills ourselves.

As we approached the end of the second week, I'd become so used to video conferencing, I'd almost forgotten the pandemic was still out there! Making tea, filing and photocopying? I don't remember the last time I saw a filing cabinet or photocopier. And you're only allowed to make your own drinks these days anyway. I did have a slight moment of panic before starting the scheme, when asked to provide my bank details and passport to someone I had only ever connected with over the internet. Fortunately, the financial assistance was paid as promised ...and it wasn't in cryptocurrency!

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